



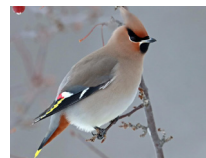
the

Pileated Post

Newsletter of the Flathead Audubon Society

VOLUME 47, NUMBER 7

Bohemian
Waxwing



Courtesy of Cornell Lab

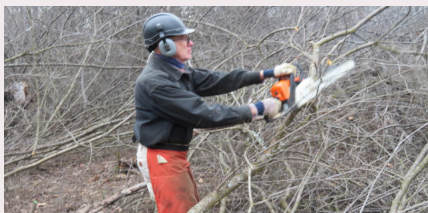
Removing Non-native Plants and Shrubs

By Pam Willison, Owen Sowerwine Chairperson

When we do “invasives” work in the Owen Sowerwine area, our goal is to diminish the impact these non-native plants and shrubs have on the native plants and shrubs, and thereby improve the food sources and habitat for the birds and critters who live there. It’s also important to prevent them from spreading, including to neighboring property or downstream. Invasive species of weeds and shrubs have many clever ways to dominate the landscape and outcompete or eliminate the native species, including making the soil acidic or toxic, growing faster and taller to get all the



Darcy and Rob



Will removing buckthorn

sunshine, taking up more water and nutrients, and producing more seeds that spread very efficiently.

People might wonder why we are cutting the February daphne, which is a lovely purple, with a sweet smell, and a surprising splash of color in early spring. February daphne is a non-native species of landscaping shrub which has escaped and taken up residence

in Owen Sowerwine. Similarly, we remove Japanese barberry, Common buckthorn, and Highbush cranberry shrubs.

During 2022, our volunteers spent 89 hours working to get rid of non-native plants and weeds, and 184 hours to expel non-native shrubs. Our approach is to use significantly more volunteers and far less chemical application. And, it’s working! There is a noticeable decline in the presence of houndstongue, a patch of cheatgrass has been totally removed, a small outbreak of Spotted knapweed is now gone, and the tall thistle at the Greenridge entrance has been reduced by nearly 75 percent. In addition, another large section of dense Common buckthorn has been cleared to allow the native shrubs to receive more sunlight, moisture, and nutrients. However, we can’t relent – the work starts again in March.

Thanks to everyone who volunteered: Will, Denny, MaryJo, Dan, Pat, Rod, Kay M., Gael, Keith, Pam, Cory, Tom, Cindy, Jake, Kristen, Bridger, Shannon, Karen, Ben, Bruce, Chris, Lynda, Sally, Michele, Kay, Ronda, Darcy, Rob, Keanu, Andrea, and Devin. Much of this work is hard and challenging, so we are grateful we have so many helpful volunteers.

All photos provided by
Pam Willison



MARCH FLATHEAD AUDUBON CALENDAR

Monday, March 6, 5:30 p.m. FAS Board of Directors Meeting. Public Meeting Room, Fish, Wildlife & Parks building, 490 N. Meridian Rd., Kalispell. You may bring your dinner.

Monday, March 13, 7 p.m. Flathead Audubon General Meeting. United Way Gathering Place, Room 26, Gateway Community Center, US Hwy. 2 West, Kalispell. East side of Gateway Mall along Glenwood Dr. All are welcome. See page 4 for how to participate digitally.

Friday, March 3, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Mission Valley Raptors. See page 5.

Sunday, March 19, 8 a.m.-noon. Spring Waterfowl: Church Slough and Lower Valley Wetlands. See page 5.

Sunday and Monday, March 26-27. Freezout Lake and Snow Geese Migration. See page 5.

BIRD OF THE MONTH

A Study of Harlequin Ducks in Glacier National Park

By Nora Kehoe

Sitting on the shore of Lower McDonald Creek, sun beating on our faces, and a cool breeze blowing off the fast-running water, I see movement in the rapids. A dark head with a signifying white dot on its face appears. I immediately radio, "Lancaster 181, I think I see one." Prior to that morning, I hardly knew what a Harlequin Duck looked like.

A volunteer was unable to attend the three-day Harlequin Duck eDNA survey and, on a whim, I was invited by wildlife technician Holli Holmes to help on her graduate project. I met Holli through my bird conservation internship at Glacier National Park's MAPS station under Lisa Bate. We are lucky enough to have a bird banding station in collaboration with the MAPS (Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship) program, which is a continent-wide collaboration to promote the conservation of our beloved avian species. I grew close to the team at the MAPS station and was ecstatic to continue working with them. I woke up at 5 a.m.



Male Harlequins
Liam Ragan/Birds of the World

to leave my home in Bigfork, meeting my team at the park. Lisa, Holli, and Barb Lancaster, an experienced volunteer, gave me a rundown on protocols and showed me pictures of Harlequins.

On the first day, we performed a ground survey using team observations. My partner is Barb, a stranger to me, who soon became a close friend. We leapfrogged along the two-mile stretch of creek, ensuring a pair of eyes were

on the water at all times. Just a short time before our excursion, major flooding erupted in Montana. Harlequin ducks nest within feet of fast-moving water, so the flooding could have easily destroyed any nests. Although chances of seeing Harlequins was lowered because of this, the team did not give up hope.

The Latin name for the Harlequin Duck,

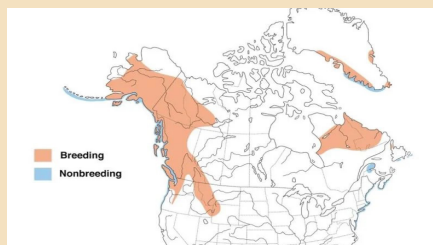
Histrionicus histrionicus, is derived from pantomime plays featuring dramatic dress and makeup. The dramatic coloring is shown in the male ducks, or drakes, with chestnut-colored splotches on their sides, and an overall slate blue color. They have striking white and black stripes across their body.

Female Harlequins have all-over smooth gray plumage. Harlequins are commonly identified by a white crescent in front of their eye and a white dot on the neck.

Harlequin Ducks are unique among waterfowl with highly evolved adaptations to their environment. These sea ducks are a complex species, spending the summer breeding season in subalpine rapid streams and rivers in the extent of their breeding habitat, Northwest Montana. Female Harlequins make their nest along the rocky shores of rapid mountain



Female Harlequin - Jeremy Weber



Birds of the World

streams each year returning to their natal waters. Harlequins form long-term pairs during winter months on East and West coastlines. Due to their harsh habitat many Harlequins sustain with bone fractures. Their diet consists of aquatic insects, small fish, and small invertebrates.

(Continued on page 7)

Dave Hadden Awarded Lifetime Conservation Achievement Recognition

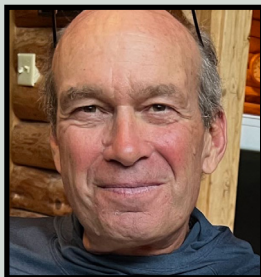
By Darcy Thomas

Flathead Audubon Society is pleased to present a Lifetime Achievement Recognition to long-time community activist Dave Hadden. Dave lives and works in the Flathead Valley where he has dedicated his life working as an environmental professional to change the political climate of the community set in the magnificent mountains of the Crown of the Continent. "If I have a single goal in my work, it is to restore the good name of conservation in the magnificent Flathead," Dave is quoted as saying.

Born in rural Ohio, Dave spent time outdoors in his home state and also in Vermont where he enjoyed a love of nature. He was quite fond of the birds and the quietness of nature. This love spurred him to go west for college, enrolling at the University of Montana in 1974. He was one of those fortunate students taken under the wing of Dr. Les Pengelly and later, in grad school, of Dr. Charles Jonkel, while he earned his B.A. in Zoology and his M.S. in Wildlife Biology. These professors who were also pioneer rebel wildlife activists, instilled in Dave a sense of deep responsibility to "fight for nature and the beings that can't talk!"

As early as 1976 Dave became involved with the Flathead Coalition that was working to protect the North Fork Flathead River and Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park from the proposed Cabin Creek coal mine just six miles north of the British Columbia border. This early effort evolved to become the primary focus of his conservation career, culminating in 2010, in the North Fork Watershed Protection Act. The enactment of this Act, in conjunction with legislation in B.C., placed the entire North Fork watershed off limits to oil, gas, coal, and other energy extraction.

Dave also acted as Field Director of the Flathead-Kootenai Chapter of the Montana Wilderness Association. Concurrently, he served as a board member of the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative (Y2Y) which focuses conservation work in the Rocky Mountains with the importance of birds and bird habitat as a central theme.



Dave Hadden

In 2006, Dave, along with a few other Flathead conservationists started Headwaters Montana which focused on the water, wildlife, and wildlands of the transboundary region between Northwest Montana and B.C./Alberta. The focus of Headwaters Montana is the North Fork of the Flathead River, the unprotected wildlands of southeastern B.C., and the international Kootenay River that originates in southeastern B.C.

Through Headwaters Montana Dave enjoyed a number of conservation wins during 2006-2020. These included a new Flathead Forest Plan that maintained protections for wildlife and wildlands across the forest, the protection of the North Fork Flathead River, and the establishment of pollution limits for selenium in the Kootenai. Headwaters Montana closed its doors in 2020 when Dave retired.

Dave continues to work on conservation concerns in Flathead Valley. He is the organizer and co-chair of the Community Association for North Shore Conservation (CANSC) which has been working to remove an illegally built bridge on the north shore of Flathead Lake near Bigfork next to the Osprey View Fisheries Conservation Area.

In addition, Dave has served for 19 years as the president of the North Shore Nordic Club which is responsible for grooming the Foothills Nordic Trails in Bigfork and Blacktail Nordic Trails above Lakeside.

"Conservation success happens slowly, some might say tediously, over years and often decades," Dave reflects. "That has been my experience. It took from 1974-2010 to protect the North Fork, for example. Conservation gets done by working cooperatively with other organizations and dedicated individuals. Every success I have been part of has come as a result of teamwork and effort, and my part has always been just a piece of the whole."

"I am deeply honored by Flathead Audubon bestowing on me their Lifetime Achievement Award. I share the honor with all my former colleagues who worked for the achievements we shared."

MARCH PROGRAM

Investigating Non-Invasive Survey Methods For Studying the Harlequin Duck

Presented By Holli Holmes

One glance at a Harlequin Duck (HADU) and even non-birders know they've seen something special. HADU are whitewater specialists and one of the hardiest sea ducks there are. They spend eight months of the year along the coasts of sub-arctic and arctic regions then migrate to fast moving, whitewater mountain streams to breed. Montana and Idaho are the southern extent of their breeding range and biologists and land managers in the region have struggled to get their finger on the pulse of how HADU populations are doing, due to the ruggedness of their habitat.

In a large-scale collaborative effort, University of Montana master's student and Glacier National Park wildlife technician, Holli Holmes, is working with land managers across Montana and Idaho to investigate three, non-invasive survey methods for studying HADU with the goal of laying the basis for building a new region-wide monitoring program.



Provided by Holli Holmes

March Meeting FAS

We will be continuing our hybrid meetings through the winter for those that may not want to drive in wintry conditions. For those coming to the meeting, on March 13, we'll meet in Room 26 of the Gateway Mall (United Way building) at 7 p.m. This room is on the east side of the building along Glenwood Drive in Kalispell. Look for our banner hanging outside.

For those joining virtually, when you use the link, you will eventually be let into a "waiting room" where you will then be added to the meeting by the host. Please sign in with your name when you enter the room so we know to admit you. You will be muted when you first join the meeting. You can use your computer's microphone and speakers (most computers have both), and this is the preferred way to join. You can also get an audio connection to the meeting without the Zoom visual capability by using your phone.

For information on how to attend by Zoom, or how to get an audio connection by phone, contact cory@flatheadaudubon.org.

Looking forward to seeing everyone!

Videos of earlier FAS meeting programs are available at <https://flatheadaudubon.org/videos>.

Highlights from the February 6, 2023 Board of Directors Meeting

By Pam Willison

Geri Meireis and Linda Winnie are working with Susie Waldron, who will complete the layout for the March newsletter. Welcome Susie!

*Denny Olson reported that things look positive for moving the Learning Kits from the cellar of Lone Pine State Park to secure storage space at Gateway Community Center. He will organize a couple of work days to complete the move. Denny also reported that he is busy doing school presentations and field trips.

*Cindy and Tom Roberts stepped down as the Chairs of the Education Committee, but will remain on the committee. Many thanks to Cindy and Tom for their leadership.

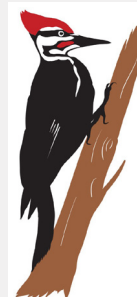
*Bridger and Shannon Donaldson are coordinating the details of a Birdathon this spring. It will be organized differently than in the past, with a larger quantity of small teams instead of two large teams. More details to come – a date will be selected at the March BOD meeting.

*The Board will participate in a Strategic Planning session on February 16, in order to assess our current status and issues, and formulate a plan to address issues and guide Board decisions.

WINTER FIELD TRIPS FOR YOU!

All Flathead Audubon field trips are free and open to the public and are geared for all ages and levels of field experience. They are led by area biologists, retired professionals, and some of the best birders in the region. Please read our field trip guidelines at <https://flatheadaudubon.org>. For all Field Trips, dress for the weather, bring binoculars or spotting scope if you have them, wear sturdy footwear, and drive and pull off the road safely. All drivers must have their own vehicle insurance. For more information, contact the individual field trip leader listed below.

Check our website for newly scheduled field trips & events.



MISSION VALLEY RAPTORS: FRIDAY, MARCH 3, 8 a.m. to approx. 5 p.m.

Join Darcy Thomas and Margaret Parodi for a day observing raptors in the Mission Valley. We will leave Kalispell at 8 a.m. and spend the day looking for birds of prey, including owls, around Ninepipe National Wildlife Refuge and areas nearby. We will make frequent stops to observe birds, and will return to Kalispell about 5 p.m. Be prepared for cold temperatures, wind, and snow. Bring binoculars and a spotting scope if you have one. Also, bring snacks and drinks. We will be stopping at Ninepipes Lodge for lunch for those who are interested. If you prefer not to eat in the restaurant you can bring your own lunch. Carpooling is encouraged. To register please contact Darcy Thomas at: darcy@flatheadaudubon.org or 406-407-8263.

SPRING WATERFOWL: CHURCH SLOUGH and LOWER VALLEY WETLANDS, SUNDAY, MARCH 19, 8 a.m. until noon. Dan Casey will lead a small group to visit Church Slough and other Somers area wetlands. Mid to late March is the prime time to see large flocks of incoming migrants, including such seasonal specialties as Greater Scaup and Eurasian Wigeon. If the conditions are right, we may see thousands of waterfowl of 15-20 species. Limited to 15 participants. Contact Dan at 406-270-5941 to reserve spots and for logistics (meeting location, carpooling).

FREEZOUT LAKE AND SNOW GEESE MIGRATION, SUNDAY AND MONDAY, MARCH 26-27.

Snow Geese will soon move from the wintering grounds to their arctic nesting areas. They stop over at Freezout Lake Wildlife Management Area (WMA) near Choteau to rest and feed for a few days before continuing their northward journey. Flathead Audubon should go visit them!

We will meet on Sunday, March 26 at 10 a.m. at the parking lot of the old K-Mart in Evergreen. Bob Lee will provide a suggested schedule and route. We will proceed to Choteau, birding along the way. We should arrive in time for some afternoon goose watching. After a night around Choteau, we will head back to Freezout just before daybreak on Monday, March 27 to watch the "mass ascension" of geese from the ponds and try to locate birds in the local agricultural fields. After the morning's birding, you can return to Kalispell in the afternoon at your own pace.

In recent years, there have been an extraordinary number of people congregating to watch the goose phenomenon. There is no indication of how many might be there this year. Please make your own arrangements for lodging. Primitive camping is available at the Freezout WMA; if there are lots of people, these sites may fill up quickly. Motel options include the Stage Stop Inn (406-466-5900), Gunther Motel (406-466-5444), and Big Sky Motel (406-466-5318). An Airbnb cabin is also available in Bowman's Corner (andrewgertge@gmail.com). Make your reservations early as these places will likely fill up quickly. For more information, contact Bob at: RML3@centurytel.net or 406-270-0371.

Sign up for Montana Audubon's Action Alert Network

The 68th Montana Legislature is in session, and the Montana Audubon team of legislative lobbyists are busy working for all of us to defend Montana's wildlife, wildlife habitat, and bedrock environmental laws. But they need your help. During this legislative session Montana Audubon will again maintain an active "Action Alert Network" that will provide you with the information you need to make your voice heard when important issues come up! To sign up for Network alerts go to <https://mtaudubon.org/join-our-online-network>. You can also access the most recent alert on the MT Audubon facebook page or check <https://mtaudubon.org/conservation-policy/take-action>.



Photo by JP Edge
Hungry Horse News

Conservation Educator's Niche

By Denny Olson

I am an Eagle.
The small world laughs at my deeds,
But the great sky keeps to itself
My thoughts of immortality

- Taos Pueblo Song



It felt like a coffin. I was lying on my back in what appeared to be a shallow grave. It was two feet deep and lined with old lichen-covered rocks. It was late winter on the prairie, but on this day the sun previewed summer, and there was no snow where I rested. As I lay there, watching the blue-white midday sky, a dark form silhouetted itself high in the sky, flying in from the east, the direction my head pointed. Another one came in from the same direction. They began to circle each other lazily, and tightened the spiral until they were almost touching. Suddenly, one of the forms flipped over. The move was startling in its contrast to their smooth flight. Talons locked, they plummeted in freefall, cartwheeling over like a critically injured kite. Almost at the ground they separated and began again to capture the updrafts in slow flight. It was 1972, and I did not know then about the romantic habits of Bald Eagles in March.

When I first found the old eagle-catching pit, I had only laid down inside from curiosity. I wanted to know what those young Mandan boys had felt during this rite of passage. In order to allow their own spirits to travel to Father Sky, they had to lure an eagle messenger down to them. The pit was covered with vegetation and a tethered live rabbit sat above the boy, as bait. When an eagle struck, there could be no mistakes. If the bird was not grabbed exactly right, above the powerful talons, there could easily be crippling injury -- both to boy and bird. I tried to feel the euphoria and adrenalin they must have felt, knowing the danger and opportunity which came with the Eagle. If the boy was successful, he would pull two tail feathers, a gift from the spirit world, and let the Eagle return to the sky, a gift

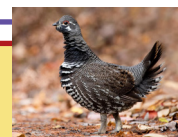
to the Wind and the Sun.

I was given the gift of the Eagle mating dance only minutes after I laid down. It was up to me to make sense of this pleasant surprise. I'm still working on it.

To Native people, eagles were the emissaries from the sky. Eagle feathers were sacred pieces of spirit -- never worn as casual adornment, but as reflections of a person's vision and accomplishments. They were expressions of bravery, good judgment, humility and special perspective. Feathers were, and are, constant prayers floating on the wind, back and forth from our world to another which is invisible to us. Eagle feathers are the dreams of the seer, the freedom of choices, the link between the material and the ether. The flight of the Eagle is the release of our earthbound nature, and the joyous passage to the next world. When we transcend any of our human limitations, we fly with the Eagle.

It is irony that environmentally aware white Americans want to protect eagles and they resent traditional uses by a people who lived harmoniously with Eagle for thousands of years. How did Eagle get so rare and endangered? A white American might point to the obvious, the unrestricted killing, the use of poisons for insect control. Done, of course, primarily by white Americans. Native people know better. Eagle represents vision and a connection with the spirit world. Eagle is a reminder that connections are far more important than differences, and a people that forgets this will have little need for messengers between worlds. According to many native elders, the Eagle once was almost gone because it did not feel needed or wanted. And a case could be made that it is still waiting for our enlightenment.

Spruce Grouse consume about 40 grams or 1.4 ounces of pine needles per day during winter months.



Flathead Valley Bird Report

By Dan Casey

Rare and Notables – JAN/FEB 2023

The latter half of January and the first half of February can often be the slowest birding season of the year. Crusted snow and ice can decrease habitat suitability for seedeaters and raptors, and many waterbodies are frozen. Such was the case this winter, and few rare or notable species were found by local birders. A few notable over-wintering birds were seen throughout the period (Spotted Towhee, Brown-headed Cowbird, Purple Finch), and by the end of the period waterfowl numbers were beginning to increase. Common Redpolls (one report) and Bohemian Waxwings (biggest flock, 150) were both reported in well below average numbers. See also:

<https://ebird.org/region/US-MT-029?yr=all>

01/19 – Brown-headed Cowbird (1, through 2/14) Creston (Craig H.)

01/21 – Purple Finch (1, through 2/11) Bigfork (Leslie K.)

01/21 – Northern Pygmy-Owl (1) North of Somers (Dan C.)

01/28 – Glaucous Gull (1) Flathead County landfill; 2 at Flathead WPA 2/14 (bj W.)

01/30 – Snow Bunting (12) Lower Valley Rd (Craig H.)

02/01 – Ferruginous Hawk (1) Back Rd, south of Polson (Ray M.)

02/08 – Long-eared Owl (2) Flathead Lake WPA (Tony L.); 3 present there 2/11 (Cory D.)

02/08 – Northern Saw-whet Owl (2) Flathead Lake WPA (Tony L.)

02/09 – Spotted Towhee (1) South of Columbia Falls (Jake B.)

02/11 – Ruby-crowned Kinglet (1) Eagle Bend (Liz R.)

What to Expect – March 2023

Finally, winter begins to lose its grip. Waterfowl numbers should increase significantly by mid-month, with flocks of Tundra Swans, Northern Pintails and American Wigeon arriving from their winter grounds. Watch for Eurasian Wigeon in the growing flocks (Church Slough, West Valley, meltwater in the fields). Red-winged Blackbirds will start staking out territories, sometimes in marshes not yet thawed out; the first bluebirds and meadowlarks will herald spring in earnest.

(Bird of the Month continued from page 2)

With two days left of the survey, we set out again, this time to locate game cameras along the water. Barb and I follow a map, which leads us to climb down to the water's edge in order to change memory cards in six game cameras. Again, we are lucky enough to observe a female duck foraging in the rapids.

The third and final day was the most influential for me, I was able to be a part of new technology, never used before for Harlequin surveys. Environmental DNA or eDNA, is organismal DNA in water which is able to be filtered out by a specialized surveying process. This DNA could be from feces, skin cells, feathers, etc. Depending on conditions, the DNA can remain in the water for 7-21 days allowing the Harlequin DNA to be detected in many places.

On the lower portion of Upper McDonald Creek, we took 15 samples along the two mile stretch of water.

The team was very encouraging, and I was

able to take a majority of the samples, using equipment and data collection. I was so grateful to have an entire team so supportive of me.

After the three-day survey I was definitely exhausted but felt so accomplished. Working with these amazing biologists was absolutely incredible. Over three days we were lucky enough to see a pair of female Harlequins. I was able to learn so much about them, watching their fascinating movements through the water.

With the help of Lisa Bate and others, Holli Holmes' project overall is studying non-invasive research techniques, specifically, ground-based surveys, camera traps, and eDNA water samples. This will help determine the future for Harlequin studies, allowing scientists to analyze changes to things such as population declines or breeding habits. Her findings will be presented in March.

https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Harlequin_Duck/lifehistory
<https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/harlequin-duck>
<https://www.usgs.gov/special-topics/water-science-school/science/environmental-dna-edna>

CONSERVATION CORNER

Whitebark pine listed as a threatened species...good news?

By Carole Jorgensen

On Dec. 14, 2022, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) listed whitebark pine as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). More than 100 species utilize whitebark pine including Hairy Woodpeckers, Cassin's Finch, Mountain Chickadees, Pine Grosbeaks, bears, and importantly, Clark's Nutcrackers who are responsible for a majority of whitebark pine regeneration.

A single nutcracker can cache up to 98,000 of the high energy nuts per year and disperse them for miles. Whitebark pine nuts are 52 percent fat and 21 percent protein, and also provide many essential minerals. The threats to whitebark pine are primarily an invasive non-native pathogen that causes blister rust, mountain pine beetle infestations (exacerbated by climate change), and fire exclusion regimes. The ESA status review noted that as of 2016, 51 percent of all standing whitebark pine trees were dead. Raising whitebark pine from the 2011 candidate listing is good because it brings additional protection and management actions to the species.

About the same time whitebark pines were listed as threatened, I got a call from a colleague telling me the "good" news that Marbled Murrelets, classified as threatened under the ESA, were

being reclassified as endangered under Oregon's endangered species act. (Montana does not have an endangered species act).

While the listing news means that these two species will receive greater protection, analysis, and attention, the news of their increased risk and declining condition hit me as a failure to proactively act to improve the conditions of these species, despite our long-term knowledge of their significant risks. It also was a gut-wrenching memory of the species that went extinct on my watch while working in Oregon.

I have the greatest respect for the biologists and managers and citizen scientists, including Audubon members, who do the hard and often grueling work of evaluating the numbers, distributions, and threats to rare species. It is difficult to evaluate rare species due to limited budgets, political pressure, changing climate and other threats. Given that, what can you do? There are some specific proactive measures individuals can take for whitebark pine: continue watching Clark's Nutcrackers and recording observations in e-bird, and check out "Save the Whitebark Pine" at <https://www.americanforests.org/save-the-whitebark-pine>.

2023 Long-billed Curlew Citizen Science Survey

Each year right around "Winter Wednesday", or the mid-point between the Winter Solstice and Spring Equinox, we notice the days getting a little longer, and the chickadees getting a little more vocal. It also means we get excited for the return of our spring and summer citizen science projects and our summer contingency of birds. Long-billed Curlews return early April each year, and their arrival triggers the start to our citizen science survey seasons that run through July.

Because curlews stay in the state for just about four months each year, we target their surveys for April and May when they are arriving from migration and setting up nesting territories. The start of spring 2023 marks Montana Audubon's 10th year supporting and advocating for citizen curlew surveys. During that time we have witnessed the expansion of subdivisions into habitat west of Canyon Ferry, an increase in traffic along routes in Helena's North Valley and the Flathead Valley, and even a few curlew broods; all from your steadfast



Long-billed Curlew - The Cornell Lab

By Amy Seaman,
Director of Policy & Science

volunteer support. Changes on the landscape only increase the importance of monitoring species number, whether the change be increases or decreases in curlew numbers, changes in the timing of observations, or change in range.

An iconic species of Montana and the intermountain grassland basins of North America, Long-billed Curlew populations have been declining across their range and more research on the breeding populations of Montana is critical to the long-term health of the species. With their flamboyant "curlee" and distinguished strut, this grassland bird makes a wonderful subject.

With dozens of survey routes to choose from, we hope you will continue to join the project in 2023!

The Long-billed Curlew Citizen Science survey will take place from April 8 - May 7 and May 8 - May 31.

If you are interested in more information, contact Cassidy Dinkel (Cassidy@mtaudubon.org) or Peter Dudley at (Peter@mtaudubon.org).

March Program of the Montana Native Plant Society, Flathead Chapter By Rachel Potter

What's Going on with the Flathead Conservation District?

Wednesday, March 22, 7 p.m.
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks,
490 N. Meridian Rd., Kalispell

Flathead Conservation District (FCD) staff will showcase their wide-ranging and exciting programs. The District provides resources, tools, funding and education for landowners to carry out conservation projects on their property. FCD helps with watershed restoration, pollinator and rain gardens, native seedlings and native grass seed mixes, lawn alternatives, soil health, and land stewardship.

Nongame Wildlife Tax Check-off

When filling out your Montana tax form this year, think "wildlife" by donating to the Nongame Wildlife Program, found on Form 2, page 11, under Contributions. If your taxes are prepared, tell your accountant that you want to donate to wildlife! Your contributions are tax deductible on next year's return. Montana has more than 500 species of "nongame" animals that benefit from public support each year at tax time. Since 1983, the check-off has contributed over \$27,000 annually to this important wildlife program.



A **SPECIAL GIFT** is a way to honor or commemorate someone special to you by supporting Flathead Audubon's local projects in their name. Special gifts are acknowledged in this space each month with the name of the donor and the person honored.

SPECIAL GIFT DONATION FORM

In memory of _____

In honor of _____

Please send a notification of this gift to:

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ ZIP _____

Donor's Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ ZIP _____

☐ Please do not acknowledge my gift in the Post

Please make checks payable to:

Flathead Audubon Society

P.O. Box 9173

Kalispell, MT 59904

Your gift is tax deductible.

Flathead Audubon Society is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Our federal tax ID number is 81-0447830.

TRIBUTE GIFTS

Janet Downey in memory of David Downey

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